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TWO BIRDERS ON THE SHORES OF SWAN LAKE

Dr. Robert F. Vane, author of this article, and his father, Dr. L. F. Vane. Photographed by Fred W. Kent.

CENTURY DAY IN THE IOWA CITY REGION

By ROBERT F. VANE
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

It was, I believe, at an Audubon Screen Tour in Cedar Rapids that I asked my friends, the Laudes and Kents of Iowa City, "How about a big birding day, a Century Day this spring, for old time's sake?"

Up to a few years ago, for the sheer fun of it, we had gone out on a marathon, if you please, to run up a one-day list of more than 100 species during the height of migration. This was no composite list. It was from one carful of observers. Nor was it a 24-hour affair such as the Delaware Valley club or the Urner club holds—it simply started for me at 3:45 a.m.! This sort of thing is easy to ridicule—to make fun of—but let me assure you it is done for the sport and fun of it and yields memories which will last for years to come.

So, on with the story. Our conversations over the phone resulted in an itinerary being planned which started at Iowa City albeit the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City areas are remarkably alike and in fact overlap when it comes to certain favorite localities. I was invited to meet Fred Kent at his home at 5 a.m. on Sunday, May 9, 1954, and we were then to pick up Pete and Marguerite Laude who would complete the party.

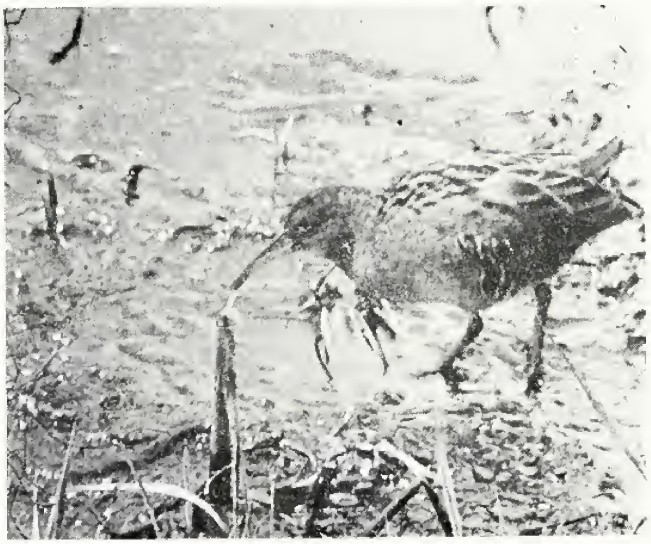
Naturally, most birders cannot sleep before one of these affairs. After tossing and turning I arose an hour early, misreading the clock, and then went back to bed even as a Catbird was singing through the night. When the alarm finally went off at 3:45, it was accompanied by the hooting of a family of Barred Owls outside in the darkness.

A flying trip was made to Iowa City, and within a few minutes of five Fred Kent was stepping into the car and the Laudes were settled in the back seat. They had been doing some unusual birding during the preceding week and had located some special sights. Our itinerary, carefully planned by the Iowa Citians to include all habitats, started at the Iowa City Country Club and ran into Dunham's farm. Later we were to cover Swan Lake and the Iowa River valley with its ponds, Amana Lake, Amana woods, and of course the remunerative roadside and fields of this fertile territory.

May 9 was a beautiful spring morning, brisk yet sunny, with the thermometer a cool 33 degrees which later rose to 53. The sun was just gaining strength as we entered the Country Club grounds with a Wood Duck flashing down the river to our left. Overhead the Great Horned owlets had left their nest and were perched high, high above, quietly eyeing us. Warblers had not yet arrived in force and those we came by, came hard. As we moved into the brushy areas of Dunham's farm in quest of sparrows, the check-list showed woodland birds to be filling out well despite the absence of great flocks of warblers. Ahead of us Harris Sparrows perched magnificently on small saplings in the open; beneath them Gambel's Sparrows scratched for their food. Along the river Green Herons flew up, overhead a Red-tail circled above its nest, Yellow Warblers dashed from the hawthorns, and flocks of Goldfinches and Pine Siskins with their characteristic notes were feeding high in the elms.

By 8:30 a.m., when we arrived back at the Kent residence for steaming pancakes and bacon with draughts of strong coffee, we had 76 species listed with hardly trying. What an area! Fortified by Clara Kent's breakfast we started out again, going northwest of Iowa City to Swan Lake.

Despite the previous heavy spring rains, the Swan Lake water-level was down (due to last fall's drought), but it had a marvelously rich shore line on which literally thousands of sandpipers had been seen. Though a considerable number had continued north, even now it was a sight to behold as



"ALMOST WITHIN ARM'S LENGTH . . . A DOZEN OR MORE RAILS"
Virginia Rail photographed by Robert Vane. Enlarged from 16 mm motion picture film.

we walked the mile around the lake. Flocks of Dowitchers were feeding, some with their heads completely under water. Wilson's Phalaropes were spinning and dabbing. Chunky Red-backed Sandpipers were running along the water's edge. Moving slowly along the shore line were Gadwalls, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Shovellers, and other ducks. Suddenly a flurry of excitement appeared on the lake. Ducks and shore-birds took off in all directions as an Osprey appeared over the lake with a fish in its talons.

Our circle of the lake completed, we were standing in the road which skirts the shore line when for a second time everything scattered on the lake as a steel-blue, black-mustached, magnificent male Duck Hawk made a pass at the entire lake, flashing this way and that with beautifully deep strokes of its long, pointed wings. It was a thrill to watch as it flew on over the lake and out of sight.

On west we drove to some roadside ponds which had been productive year after year. This year was no exception, and almost within arm's length of the car we watched a dozen or more rails: Soras, Virginias and two Kings as they fed in a drainage ditch. On the opposite side of the road in another drainage ditch stood a motionless Least Bittern not 12 feet away. And against a fence-post an American Bittern stood "freezing" with its bill high in the air. But something more has caught our attention. In the pond in what is nearly the farmer's barnyard are five larger shore-birds: their under-parts are chestnut, their backs are gray, their bills are upturned! We watch them intently through our 'scopes. We approach more and more closely. They don't seem to be particularly wary for larger birds. Finally, after delighting in them for 30 minutes or more, we flush them for the thrill of the day as the spectacular black and white tails, the white wing-stripes and the upturned bills proclaim them to be Hudsonian Godwits, one of the rare birds of North America—so rare indeed that Audubon himself never saw one alive! And here we had five of them in beautiful plumage. What tremendous luck on our Century Day!

But we are not finished. Our route continues westward into the Amana colony woods and a favorite picnic area where we do justice to the lunch the Laudes had prepared—baked ham in good Amana bread with everything that should go with it, delicious coffee, and to top things off chilled fresh pineapple with devil's food cake and white frosting; a wonderful menu any time, but in the woods in mid-afternoon simply delicious.

Leaving the Amana woods, Amana Lake soon came into view and there, gathered on a sand bar, were 15 White Pelicans. Our list was now mounting for sure, and it only remained to retrace our steps and pick up the few species, if possible, which we knew we had missed.

Stopping at Swan Lake on the return trip, sure enough, there was the Eared Grebe which somehow had eluded us on the morning visit. There, too, on a wire was the first Dickcissel of the season. As we crisscrossed the countryside back and forth toward Iowa City, our first Sparrow Hawk flew into view.

And so, tired but thrilled and happy over the results of the Century Day, we compiled our list after we had pulled up in front of the Kent home at 6:30 p.m. How elated we were when the list totaled 120 species for the day! As we thought of the shore-bird spectacle, the Duck Hawk episode, the Hudsonian Godwits, we knew that these sights would stay with us for years and years. Even now as I write this, thoughts and plans for next year's Big Day are running through my mind.

THE SPRING SEASON OF 1954 AT SWAN LAKE

By FRED W. KENT
IOWA CITY, IOWA
(With photographs by the author)

Featured by open water in February and a lowered water-level with wide, mud-flat shore line, Swan Lake proved attractive to water and shore birds, so unusual that frequent checks (55) on the bird population produced a fine list of spring migrants.

In the third week of February this lake northwest of Iowa City was free of ice with some 100 Mallards appearing as well as a few Pintails, Baldpates, Ring-necks, Scaups, and Green-winged Teal. Following a freeze-up the first week of March, open water on March 10 attracted some 2000 Mallards and Pintails which stayed around for a couple of weeks, with some Shovellers, Gadwalls, Mergansers, Coots, Grebes and Killdeers appearing. The last of March brought a few other ducks, Blue and Snow Geese, and the advance guard of Blue-winged Teal, Snipes and Yellow-legs which later were so numerous. After a 5-inch snow on the 29th of March, the first week of April showed a marked increase in Teal, Pectorals, Snipes and Yellow-legs, with White-fronted Geese and a Piping Plover as unusual visitors. Spring arrivals continued through April, including the first of the Peeps and rails. Dowitchers spent all of a month drilling away, Willets were recorded for three weeks, and Ringed Plovers were common for five weeks.

May was shore-bird time, with the large number of Pectorals and Yellow-legs being replaced with equal numbers of the Least, Baird's and Semipalmated Sandpipers which almost concealed the less common varieties. Early in the month the Wilson's Phalaropes appeared while the Northern showed up on May 27 in a group of nine seen first by Lillian Serbousek. At least one Marbled Godwit was around for a week and posed for some movies for Bob Vane. From one to six Hudsonian Godwits were observed over a period of three weeks, seemingly unconcerned with nearby observers. Equally unconcerned were Virginia and Sora Rails in a nearby area where Dr. Vane took more movies, but the King Rails were shy as were the American



SHORE-BIRDS ON SWAN LAKE — RUDDY TURNSTONE AT LEFT END OF GROUP

and Least Bitterns. Only a few Golden and Black-bellied Plovers were seen this year, but the Dunlins (Red-backekd Sandpipers) appeared in flocks of of 6 to 20 over a period of a month, all in fine plumage, and a flock of 8 were the only shore-birds seen in June (June 4). On May 21, we found 20 Ruddy Turnstones feeding on the near shore, and several days later two of them still remained for Dr. Vane to photograph. Also in the last week of the month, among the small sandpipers, were several Sanderlings in both winter and transition plumage.

Notable among the other visitors at Swan Lake was a fine male Duck Hawk which made several rapid passes and dives over the water, causing considerable confusion to the other birds there. This was on May 9, the day that Dr. and Mrs. Laude, Dr. Vane and I recorded 120 species, among which were 15 Pelicans at Amana Lake. Different, too, was a flock of 14 Blue and Snow Geese which spent a month at Swan Lake into the first week of May.



VIRGINIA RAILS FEEDING IN MARGINAL WATER

There were eight or nine Virginia Rails, ten Soras, and two King Rails in this small pond about 150 feet long. An American Bittern was on the other side of the fence.

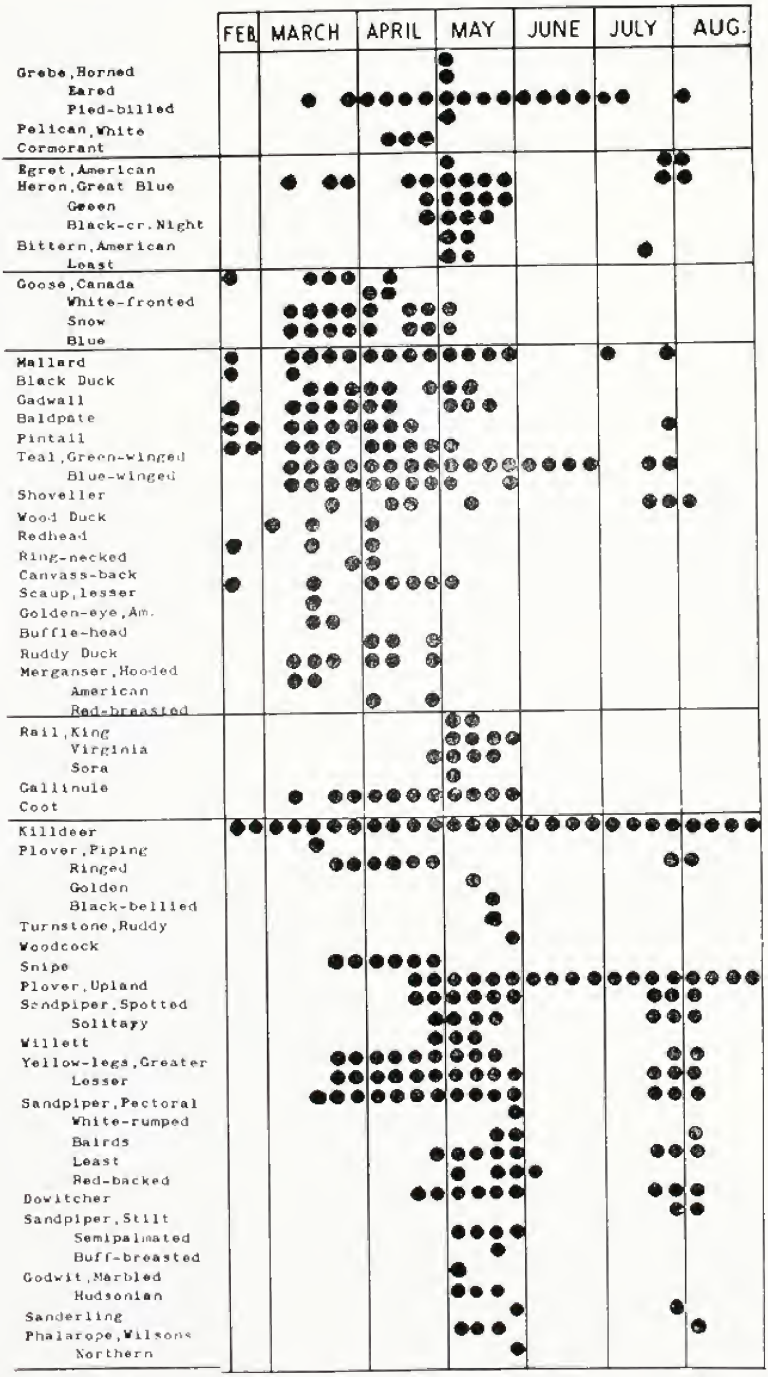


CHART SHOWING OCCURRENCE OF VARIOUS WATER BIRDS AT SWAN LAKE, FEBRUARY-AUGUST, 1954.
Compiled by Fred W. Kent.

Below are given my observation dates at the Swan Lake area in 1954.
February—6, 9, 13, 16, 18, 20, 24, 27.
March—4, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 20, 25, 27, 31.
April—3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29.
May—1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29.
June—1, 4, 12, 16, 24.
July—4, 13, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 28, 31.
Aug.—1, 3, 6, 8, 12. (14 Lake dried up)



SWAN LAKE AT LOW-WATER STAGE
Normal water-level would cover all the lake bed in the foreground.

NECROLOGY

Dr. Charles A. Stewart, who became a member of Iowa Ornithologists' Union in 1944, died at his home at Hillside Lodge, near New Albin, Iowa, on May 14, 1954. Troubled with a heart ailment for three years, his final, serious illness came only a few weeks before his passing. He was stricken a few days after returning home, with his wife and mother-in-law, from his annual winter vacation at Gulfport, Mississippi. He was nearing his 72nd birthday, having been born May 18, 1882.

Philadelphia, Penna., was Dr. Stewart's boyhood home, where he obtained his education in the public schools. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, he went to Omaha, Nebraska, to become associated with the Bureau of Animal Industry. A few years later he became superintendent of the Cudahy Packing Plant at Omaha, retaining that position until he retired in 1941. In 1944 Dr. Stewart purchased an acreage near New Albin, where he resided until his death except for winters spent in the South. He was an only child and is survived by his wife, the former Bess Greer.

Dr. Stewart was an enthusiastic lover of nature and spent a great deal of time in the woods and on the water. He attended many of our IOU conventions and appeared on the programs on numerous occasions, when he gave well prepared papers covering different phases of his bird work. He also published many articles in "Iowa Bird Life." The last time he attended one of our conventions was in 1950, and we have missed him since then.—F. J. P.

WATER-BIRD MIGRATION AT LITTLE WALL AND GOOSE LAKES, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, SPRING OF 1954

By NEIL A. CASE and GEORGE O. HENDRICKSON

Dept. of Zoology & Entomology
Iowa State College
AMES, IOWA

Counts of birds at the lakes, begun on March 18, were taken three times a week from March 25 to June 5, 1954. Little Wall Lake, shallow and with an area of near 300 acres, is about 2 miles south of Jewell. Scattered emergent vegetation was apparent over about three-fourths of the lake, and the west end was deepened by dredging last year. The lake, free of ice a few days prior, had a thin ice layer March 29 and 30, except at a small area on the east side. A 4-inch snowfall, which came with a cold spell March 29, was melted by April 1. Table 1 summarizes counts of geese, ducks, and coots at Little Wall Lake.

Table 1. Geese, Ducks and Coots at Little Wall Lake, Spring, 1954.

	Date First Seen	Dates of Main Flight	Largest Concentration	Date Last Seen
Canada Goose	March 31	April 5	60	May 3
White-fronted Goose	March 31	April 2	10	April 2
Snow Goose	March 18	April 5	55	May 3
Blue Goose	March 18	March 18	300	May 3
Mallard	March 25	Mar. 29-Apr. 2	500	May 13
Gadwall	March 29	April 5	120	June 3
Baldpate	March 31	April 9	32	June 5
Pintail	March 25	March 29	300	May 3
Green-winged Teal	March 25	April 2	50	April 29
Blue-winged Teal	March 31	April 24	310	June 3
Shoveller	March 25	Apr. 2-5	250	June 3
Redhead	March 25	March 31	200	June 1
Ring-necked Duck	March 25	March 25	250	June 3
Canvas-back	March 25	April 2	250	June 3
Scaup Duck	March 25	Mar. 31-Apr. 2	600	June 5
American Golden-eye	April 5	Apr. 5, May 10	1	May 10
Buffle-head	March 25	April 9	23	May 6
Ruddy Duck	March 25	April 24	8	April 24
Hooded Merganser	March 29	March 29	2	March 31
American Merganser	March 25	March 25	7	May 3
Red-breasted Merganser	April 24	April 24	5	April 26
Coot	March 25	April 19	2800	June 5

Goose Lake, shallow and in extent about 100 acres with a small wooded island near the center, is within a mile east of Jewell. More than one-half of the lake had patches of dense stands of emergent vegetation, and wide belts of sedges were at the south and west sides mostly. Privately owned, and leased to a hunting club, Goose Lake has less disturbance than Little Wall Lake, State-owned and managed by the Iowa State Conservation Commission as a general public recreational area. In the cold spell of late March Goose Lake was almost completely frozen over. Table 2 summarizes the counts of geese, ducks and coots at Goose Lake.

Table 2. Geese, ducks and coots at Goose Lake, Spring, 1954.

	Date First Seen	Dates of Main Flight	Largest Concentration	Date Last Seen
Canada Goose	March 29	March 29	6	April 22
White-fronted Goose	April 9	April 9	5	April 9
Snow Goose	April 9	Apr. 22-24	115	May 27
Blue Goose	April 9	Apr. 29-May 6	242	May 27
Mallard	March 25	March 25	600	June 3
Gadwall	April 5	April 19	70	June 5
Baldpate	March 25	April 29	120	May 17
Pintail	March 25	March 25	300	June 3
Green-winged teal	March 25	April 2	50	May 15
Blue-winged teal	March 25	May 1-3	250	June 5
Shoveller	March 25	April 22	320	June 1
Wood Duck	May 10	May 10	4	May 15
Redhead	March 25	March 25	60	May 10
Ring-necked Duck	April 5	April 5	30	April 24
Canvas-back	April 10	April 19	20	June 3
Scaup Duck	March 25	April 10	200	June 5
Buffle-head	April 19	April 19	2	April 19
Ruddy Duck	April 24	May 10	4	May 10
Hooded Merganser	April 12	April 24	4	April 24
Coot	March 25	Apr. 22-24	800	June 1

Among other birds seen at the lakes and considered worthy of record were: Horned Grebe, 1, April 24; Bald Eagle, 1, April 24; Florida Gallinule, 1 to 3 a trip, May 10 to 22; American Golden Plover, 28, May 13; Black-bellied Plover, 1 to 4 a trip, May 13 to 24; Ruddy Turnstone, 2 to 6 a trip, May 24 to 29; Willet, 18, April 22 and 1 each, April 29 and May 1; Marbled Godwit, 1, May 10; Hudsonian Godwit, 1 to 5 a trip, May 13 to 22; Caspian Tern 3, May 24, and 4, May 27.

GENERAL NOTES

Snowy Egret at Elk Horn.—For about four or five days in mid-April, 1954, a single Snowy Egret fed at what we locally call "Carlson's Pond", just outside the north edge of Elk Horn. I saw the bird there several times a day during that time, as whenever possible I routed my calls that way. I noted characteristic marks of the bird and especially those yellow feet.—GERALD E. LARSON, M. D., Elk Horn, Iowa.

Arkansas Kingbird in Black Hawk County.—On May 17, 1954, while on a field trip with Mr. and Mrs. John Barlow, I found an Arkansas or Western Kingbird. We saw the bird near the entrance to Josh Higgins Park, along the newly graded road at the Waterloo end of the park. This rather large flycatcher flew up from a fence-row and when it alighted again we had very good looks at it. Later in the day it was seen at the same place; two Eastern Kingbirds were there at that time, and we had a fine opportunity for comparison.—RUSSELL HAYS, Waterloo, Iowa.

Spring Planting.—On March 27, 1954, a group from the Waterloo bird club put out eight bluebird houses and a martin house, along with bittersweet, elderberries and other plants in the sanctuary area owned by Donald Sage, northeast of Waterloo. Multiflora rose and other plants were added later. Mr. Sage told us that he has planted well over 2000 trees and plants on the area. A nice flock of Blue Geese, accompanied by one Snow Goose, flew over us while we were placing the posts for the bluebird houses.—RUSSELL HAYS, Waterloo, Iowa.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron in Black Hawk County.—On May 19, 1954, while looking for warblers along Black Hawk Creek, I started up a strangely unfamiliar heron. I decided to pursue it, and wearing my camouflage suit, I managed to crawl within 30 feet of it. It was a Yellow-crowned Night Heron and was a big thrill to me for it was the first time I had seen this species. There was no mistaking the slate-blue color, the white portions of the head, and the contrast in appearance with the Black-crowned Heron. The bird was standing in bright sunlight and I watched it for some time. Later it was seen by Mr. and Mrs. John Barlow, George Faulkner, Dr. C. W. Robertson, and Dr. Martin Grant.—RUSSELL HAYS, Waterloo, Iowa.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron in Fort Defiance State Park.—On May 9, 1954, while Mrs. Jones and I were birding in the creek bottoms of the park we happened on to a heron-like bird that arose hastily from the rocky creek bed as we focused our attention on crossing the stream. It flew to a convenient tree where we watched it at about 50 yards for as long as we wished. A heron with the usual long plume but "bald" head was a new one to us.

According to DuMont's "Birds of Iowa" and other available publications, this Yellow-crown seemed worthy of further observation. I contacted Bruce Stiles relative to collecting, but we have what is in some ways a more satisfactory record. Dr. Christensen, of Spencer, came on May 10 with his 16mm camera equipped with an 18x lens and took 120 feet of film, finally getting within 75 feet of the bird which was close enough to completely fill the frame. The heron could not be found in this area at later dates.—MYRLE L. JONES, Estherville, Iowa.

Bird Notes from Southeast Iowa.—On July 4, 1954, Dennis Sheets and I found a nest of the Yellow-breasted Chat. It contained two eggs, one very fresh, and was about 2 feet from the ground in a blackberry bush. The location was in southern Clinton County, about 4 miles west of DeWitt. Lang Baily and I returned to the nest area on July 10 to photograph it. Unfortunately, during previous days cattle in that part of the pasture had evidenly destroyed the nest, for we found part of it on the ground; we did see one chat in the vicinity. Probably it was too late in the season for a renesting attempt.

On July 22, 1954, Lang Baily and I, with Mr. and Mrs. Price, saw two small herons in a flock of 16 American Egrets on the north end of Lake Odessa in Louisa County, Iowa. From a range of 250 yards they appeared to have black bills. Lang and I approached within 100 yards, and the birds flushed. They had dark bills, legs and feet. When they flushed, five other birds of the same size also flew up; they were slaty-blue in coloration. We identified the group as two immature and five adult Little Blue Herons. On July 23, in company with my parents, I observed four adults and two immature Little Blues in the same spot. On July 27, Norwood Hazard and I saw eight immature and two adult Little Blues about a half mile northeast of this place.

On July 27, Norwood Hazard and I saw a Henslow's Sparrow on the bluff above Lake Odessa. We observed the bird in good light for 15 minutes at 35 feet with 20-power 'scope, and noted such markings as the necklace of fine streaks, two marks on either side of the bill and extending along the side of the throat, chestnut brown on the wing and olive appearance of the sides of the head.

A nest of the Bell's Vireo was found at Cordova Quarry, on the Illinois side of the river, on July 24. The nest contained three eggs on that date, but on August 4 there were three young about half grown, wing feathers breaking out of quills. Bell's Vireo was also seen at Lake Odessa on July 27.

Several friends and I saw a female and three young Hooded Mergansers on July 20, observed at 30 feet from a canoe. The young appeared to be about three-fourths grown and could fly. We found them at Dead Slough, near the mouth of Rock River, about a quarter-mile from the Mississippi River in Illinois. When last seen, they were flying in the direction of Iowa.—PETER C. PETERSEN, JR., Davenport, Iowa.

Waterfowl at Sweet Marsh.—On March 20, 1954, I visited Sweet Marsh, the state-owned waterfowl area near Tripoli. I started from the paved highway and walked the entire distance from there along the west bank, but I failed to see many birds until I reached the main slough. First I saw six Shovellers followed by a Green-winged Teal. The Mallards were beginning to leave in a hurry as I walked along so I dropped behind the dikes in order to have a better chance. There were approximately 200 Mallards on this area of the slough. Near the extreme eastern edge were six light ducks which I was finally able to identify as American Mergansers, the only fish ducks present as far as I could see. I saw one small group of Pintails among the Mallards.

Quite a number of Lesser Yellow-legs were present, about 20 of them scattered over a wide area; I also saw 10 Killdeers. Two gulls flew over at a distance—probably Herring Gulls. The diving ducks did not seem to be present on this day, and I saw only one Redhead and three Canvas-backs. While I was eating lunch two flocks of Canada Geese circled the two portions of the marsh. One swept directly over the several cars parked near the dam and caused quite a stir among the people who were watching there.

The Sweet Marsh area has some woodland and this was alive with Slate-colored Juncos and Tree Sparrows; they filled the air with song. One Red-headed Woodpecker was seen in the same area where one was seen on the Christmas bird census. It probably wintered there. I couldn't find the Pileated Woodpecker (but I fell through the ice while seeking him). I saw 10 Rusty Blackbirds in the woods near the dam and got a fine look at them.—RUSSELL HAYS, Waterloo, Iowa.

Weaklings Among Young Purple Martins.—For 26 years we have maintained a martin house, and every year we have found several young martins, unable to fly, which have fallen to the ground near the house. Sometimes they are quite small and barely feathered; other times they are well grown and able to fly a short distance. I have tried different ways to save these young. Sometimes I have taken a ladder and placed them on the house porch. On other occasions I have tossed them up into the air and they flutter to the house. Sometimes they have flown to nearby trees when tossed into the air.

In late June, 1954, I found a young martin on the ground. It was fairly grown and I tried tossing it up, but each time it flew just enough to miss the house. After four or five of these attempts, I put the bird in a tree near the house. Two days later I saw a young martin under a peony bush growing just below the martin house. I had no way of knowing, but I presumed that this was the young bird I had placed in the tree. I saw an adult male Purple Martin fly down to the ground and feed the young bird under the peony bush—the first time I had ever seen an adult martin feed a young bird on the ground. The old birds apparently keep track of their young and know when they have fallen to the ground, for they will attack persons or dogs approaching the young. They flutter about and seem to try to get the young to fly off the ground.—ALOIS J. WEBER, Keokuk, Iowa.

A Sight Record of White-faced Glossy Ibis.—On April 30, 1954, a White-faced Glossy Ibis was observed near the intersection of highways No. 175 and 37, east of Turin in western Iowa. Dick Hanson and George Johnson, editors of Successful Farming magazine of Des Moines, found this lone adult in full plumage feeding along the edge of a small pond beside the highway. Knowing they had a rare record for the state, they both watched the bird closely at a distance of less than 100 feet for considerable time as it fed and finally flew away. They both gave me accurate descriptions of the bird, and since they have observed ibises and related birds in the south they are well acquainted with this species. I have been in the field with both men and am confident of their ability to identify this bird.—MAYNARD REECE, Des Moines, Iowa.

Kentucky Warbler in Central Iowa in Mid-summer.—On July 11, 1954, Albert Berkowitz and I, while walking down a lane leading to the Van Meter Cemetery in Dallas County, heard what appeared at first to be the song of a distant Oven-bird. After a short wait the song was repeated and we were of the opinion that we had been listening to a Kentucky Warbler. This opinion was strengthened when persistent squeaking produced a momentary glimpse of a warbler-sized bird with bright yellow underparts, but an unclimable fence and thick foliage made a closer view or pursuit impossible. The song was repeated several times within the following half hour, but the bird was not seen again. We are convinced that the bird was the Kentucky Warbler, and since the state is in its breeding range we wonder if the apparent scarcity of the species is due to a tendency to confuse its song with that of the Oven-bird.—WOODWARD H. BROWN, Des Moines, Iowa.

The Blue Grosbeak in Western Iowa.—During the earlier portion of the last 50 years, some of our pioneer lady bird-watchers, namely Mrs. W. J. Armour, Mrs. Mary Bailey and Mrs. J. A. Dales, occasionally reported seeing a Blue Grosbeak as they took bird hikes along the Big Sioux River near Sioux City, Iowa. Most of the male bird-watchers in this area were not ready to accept these sight records of so uncommon a bird and recognition was not readily forthcoming. Specimens had never been taken, male bird students had not found this grosbeak in the field, and general skepticism continued to prevail until the present writer finally collected a breeding male on June 23, 1934, on the J. W. Sturtevant farm along the Big Sioux River in Plymouth County. Since 1932 I have occasionally seen this species in the same general area, and have quite a number of records over the years.

Acting on a tip from Wm. R. Felton, Jr., that Blue Grosbeaks had been seen 18 miles east of Sioux City, along the West Fork of the Little Sioux River, I drove over to interview the observer, Arthur Ford of Moville, Woodbury County. My visit with Mr. Ford was greatly enjoyed. I was surprised to learn that he is not only a keen student of birds and animals but one of the best lay entomologists in this part of the country. He has made a collection of most of the insects to be found in his section of Iowa.

I took a small collection of bird study-skins with me, as I like to ask about certain species and get people to tell me if they have seen this or that bird as well as something about their abundance and other facts. As soon as I showed Mr. Ford a specimen of the Blue Grosbeak, he at once said it was the bird he had seen along the West Fork during the summer of 1953. He had not seen it during the current summer, however. To me this verification is but another link in a chain of evidence that the Blue Grosbeak is a permanent summer resident of western Iowa. I have personal grosbeak records extending from the Missouri state line north to Plymouth County, but most of these are quite near the Missouri River itself. The Moville

record is nearly 20 miles to the east, however. In substance it means that here is a bird species which has probably been present through the years. The lack of intense field work or any collecting had kept the bird practically unknown to us.

During the 1954 season, I first saw a Blue Grosbeak along the Big Sioux River, Plymouth County, on May 18. Then on May 27, I saw a male grosbeak on the Sturtevant farm, where I have found them several times. Going farther up the road, I saw a pair of grosbeaks near the Duffy filling station. This pair was rather interested in a small clump of wild plum trees and no doubt nested there later on. On nearing the mouth of Broken Kettle Creek, I saw a lone female Blue Grosbeak flying along a fence-row.—WM. YOUNGWORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

Bird Notes from Central Iowa.—It was my good fortune to come upon a number of interesting and unusual birds during the 1954 season. I was delighted to find a Prairie Warbler among my bushes on April 26. I had a very close view in good light and the bird was under observation for 15 minutes, with all markings, including the chestnut lines on the back, plainly seen.

On May 10, Mrs. J. E. Rose and I drove to Goose Lake just east of Jewell. As we stood on the shore watching several Hudsonian Godwits, a Black-necked Stilt flew in near shore, where it remained for about 20 minutes. We were behind a screen of bushes, so the birds were not disturbed by our presence. When we reached Little Wall Lake, we were fortunate in finding many shore-birds, including seven Piping Plovers. The Piping Plovers were still there on May 13, when Mr. and Mrs. John Barlow and I drove over to the lake. We also found a Florida Gallinule among the numerous Coots.

Mrs. Barlow and I went to Black Hawk Creek in Waterloo on May 19; she had discovered a Yellow-crowned Night Heron there a few days before. Good fortune was with us again, for we located the bird very quickly. As I drove from Upper to Lower Pine Lake on June 1, I discovered a Western Kingbird on a fence; I watched it for a full half hour. While exploring Big Marsh north of Parkersburg on the morning of August 10, I saw a Little Blue Heron in juvenile plumage. In the afternoon Mrs. Harold Brown and I met Mr. and Mrs. John Barlow at the marsh. We soon located three Little Blues. They were not far away, and with a 20-power 'scope we had a perfect view of them.—MRS. J. RAY KING, Grundy Center, Iowa.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

As usual at this time of year, our information about the vacations and summer travels of our members is rather meager, due to the fact, no doubt, that the members have been too busy to send in their notes. We have received a small amount of information, which we shall report below.

Dr. and Mrs. F. L. R. Roberts, of Corona, Calif., spent a part of the summer in Iowa. They spent several weeks at their old home at Spirit Lake, with special trips to Des Moines, Winthrop, and other places.

Oscar P. Allert, of McGregor, had a two-weeks, 5000-mile auto trip to the West Coast in July. Places visited included the Black Hills, Yellowstone Park, Custer Battlefield, Spokane, Columbia River highway to Portland, then Tacoma, Seattle, and Yakima, with a visit to the Theodore Roosevelt Monument in the North Dakota Badlands on the return trip. He had time for bird observations at many places and added two dozen new species to his life list.

Tom Kent, well known ornithologist and photographer of Iowa City, was home only briefly after his college year ended. Following the profession

of commercial stereo photographer during vacation months, his first assignment was in the Black Hills region, where he spent about three weeks in June and July. Later in the summer he covered North Dakota and Wisconsin.

Lang Baily and Peter Petersen, Jr., of Davenport, attended the Wilson Ornithological Club convention at Cape May, New Jersey. They report it as an unusually fine trip of eight days in mid-June. Their most interesting observation was a Cattle Egret in full breeding pumage. They also saw Great Black-backed Gulls, Knots, Wilson's Plover, Chuck-will's-widow, American and Surf Scoters, Clapper Rails, Louisiana Heron, colonies of Least Terns, Piping Plovers and Black Skimmers. Mr. Baily took a train to New Jersey and a plane back to Davenport. Petersen went to Blue Island, Illinois, then rode with Karl Bartel.

Mr. and Mrs. Forrest G. Millikin, of Sigourney, enjoyed a two-weeks vacation trip to the Upper Peninsua of Michigan in the last half of July. Mrs. Millikin wrote on August 1: "We spent two days on the Seney National Wildlife Refuge, which is the nesting ground for many Canada Geese and a few Sandhill Cranes. We went on the guided tour which is made every Wednesday afternoon but saw more birds when we went out alone. The oficers in charge gave us a check-list of birds and a map of the area, which covers 96,000 acres. Besides geese and cranes, we saw an active eagle's nest with young Bald Eagles almost ready to leave, American Bittern, Woodcock, Pine Siskin, Leconte's Sparrow, and many Red-breasted Nuthatches. We saw two Whistling Swans which are staying there but not nesting. Altogether we saw 59 different species and added several to our life lists. Because of bridge-building, we were unable to get to the heavily wooded section."

The Sioux City Bird Club, which sponsored the "Zell C. Lee Memorial" and received donations to the Memorial fund, in May presented 52 framed Audubon prints to the Board of Education of the Sioux City schools. The pictures were paid for by the Memorial fund and have been placed in the schools of the city as a permanent memorial to Miss Lee. Two pictures were also presented to the town of Anthon for their memorial hall. Miss Lee was once a resident of Anthon, Iowa. A photograph of Miss Lee was placed on the back of each frame with the following explanation: "These framed Audubon prints have been presented to the public grade schools of Sioux City by the friends of Zell C. Lee as a memorial to her. Because to increase the appreciation of the beauty and usefulness of birds among pople in general, and school children in particular, had become one of her major interests, it was thought appropriate and fitting that these pictures be placed within the constant view of all grade school pupils. During the last 15 years of her life, Miss Lee, through her leadership in the Sioux City Bird Club, her time given to nature instruction to the scouts, the bringing of the Audubon screen tours to Sioux City and her membership in the Izaak Walton League, had performed a great service to the cause of wildlife preservation, and so, to the far greater cause of conservation, and ultimately to humanity. For this her friends wish her to be remembered through the years."

The Christmas Bird Census will be taken as usual between December 20 and 31. Study the form of censuses published in previous March issues and follow details carefully. List the birds in the A. O. U. order, giving exact number seen, and include data on hours, weather, and ground conditions. Send your list to the Editor of "Iowa Bird Life" not later than January 15, the closing date for our tabulation.